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ABSTRACT

A survey of the literature of instructional evaluation, highlighting appropriate methods for encouraging, assessing, and documenting effective higher education English instruction, can aid English departments in search of valid measures of teaching effectiveness. Before a department can formalize any system of assessment, it must first establish some consensus about what constitutes good teaching based on the proportional emphasis assigned to each of the following areas: content expertise, instructional delivery skills, and instructional design skills. Although data relating to each of these instructional roles may come from a variety of sources, no single source is appropriate for assessing a teacher's effectiveness in all three. Student evaluation, peer evaluation, and self-evaluation all have strengths and weaknesses when used to evaluate teaching effectiveness. Two strategies for the development of effective assessment procedures are: (1) compilation of a current anthology of evaluative instruments and procedures validated within specific settings; and (2) establishment of a corpus of research in the area of teaching assessment by scholars in English study. (One figure and two notes are included; 41 references are attached.) (RS)

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Christopher Gould

Converting Faculty Assessment into Faculty Development: The Director of Composition's Responsibility to Probationary Faculty

The Cheney Report, a strident rebuke to higher education, is seasoned with the acerbic observations of disillusioned academics. A professor of classics declares that "universities are as uncongenial to teaching as the Mojave Desert to a clutch of Druid priests." An historian finds his colleagues to be "in full flight from teaching" and adds that "[i]n many universities, faculty members make no bones about the fact that students are the enemy" (qtd. in "'Research'" A22). Though measured and restrained by comparison, the recent report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching lends further support to the popular belief that college professors teach poorly and half-heartedly.[1]

Apprehensive that current trends could possibly transform the conventional academic reward system, university administrators are showing renewed interest in the assessment of teaching effectiveness. For English departments, usually alert to periodic demands for better teaching, the scenario is familiar. Responding to the accountability movement of the sixties and seventies, the Modern Language Association published a survey of evaluation practices in college and university English departments throughout the United States and Canada. Seeking "to differentiate the art of evaluating teaching in English from the art of evaluating instruction in other subjects," Richard Larson, the author of this survey,

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acknowledged that he could discern "no bases or procedures for evaluation intended solely for courses in English" (6). Larson's disappointment is echoed in the findings of a concurrent, though less focused, survey conducted by Thomas Wilcox and summarized in a volume titled The Anatomy of College English:

> The college teacher is seldom or never observed at his work except by those on whom he is working, and the effects of his efforts cannot be assessed. Those who are charged with judging his competence as a teacher must therefore gather their evidence by indirect, imperfect means, and often the evidence they acquire is of dubious validity. (29)

Further corroboration can be found in the 1965 report of an ad hoc faculty committee at Yale, which concluded that "the problem of evaluating teaching is one for which no solution seems altogether satisfactory" (qtd. in Wilcox 37). This frustrating state of affairs underscored, in Larson's words, a "pressing need . . . for discussion of exactly what we think of as 'good teaching' in our subject" (6).

Today, twenty years after the publication of these reports, English departments still have not reached any firm consensus regarding the measurement of effective teaching. Or, if they have, that consensus has not been set forth in any widely published guidelines or recommended procedures. A review of ERIC documents indexed since 1970 supports this conclusion: permutations similar to the one under which Larson's report is indexed ("College English" or "English Departments" or "English

Instruction" and "Teacher Evaluation") bring forth sixty-five documents, twenty-two of which are concerned, at least to some extent, with higher education. Of these, only four have been published since 1983; another six appeared in print between 1976 and 1982; and the remaining twelve predate 1976. These numbers suggest that interest in the evaluation of teaching, at least as a topic of research and professional debate, has declined over the past two decades.

A closer look at the twenty-two documents shows that only three titles (excluding the titles by Larson and Wilcox already cited) address comprehensive methods of evaluating instructional effectiveness. One of these, an article by Kenneth Eble in the ADE Bulletin, is confined to fairly broad generalities: data must be gathered in a consistent manner; these data should be clear and intelligible; tenured professors should strive to remain informed about the teaching practices of junior faculty. The two other sources--a "Staffroom Interchange" item from CCC and a doctoral dissertation--will be discussed hereafter.

Given this dearth of resources specific to the discipline, English departments in search of valid measures of teaching effectiveness must turn to the more substantial database provided by educational research. There are, however, understandable misgivings about the applicability of methods and standards that may be more appropriate to fields in which learning is defined as the acquisition and retention of subject matter. It is my aim, therefore, to survey the literature of instructional evaluation,

highlighting appropriate methods for encouraging, assessing, and documenting effective English instruction.

This survey should offer several practical benefits. First, it provides guidance for departmental administrators in colleges and universities that stress teaching. Departments that have evaluative instruments and systems in place can compare their practices with the findings and recommendations of research; departments that have yet to formalize a comprehensive system will find guidelines for initiating one. Also, this survey presents methods whereby senior faculty in research universities can document the aptitudes and professional development of graduate students who seek entry-level jobs in teaching institutions. Finally, I hope to reintroduce the topic of instructional evaluation as a serious professional concern in English study. I shall therefore conclude with recommendations for research and an appeal for a published compilation of successful evaluative practices employed by college and university English departments throughout the country.

I want to preface this survey with two important observations. First, authorities in the field of instructional evaluation agree that data used in a formative context (to improve teaching) must be carefully distinguished from data used for summative purposes (to evaluate faculty members, usually for tenure and promotion). Since departments can, as a rule, exercise greater latitude in gathering the former (Cohen and McKeachie 147), I shall keep this distinction in view, identifying those methods of assessment that are less appropriate

for summative evaluation. Second, although some methods of assessment are more valid than others, no one method used alone provides a completely adequate measure of teaching effectiveness (Greenwood and Ramagli 681). Departments should therefore gather data, both formative and summative, from a variety of appropriate sources--ideally as many as possible (Cashin, "Assessing" 93).

Most authorities in the field of instructional evaluation agree that before a department can formalize any system of assessment, it must first establish some consensus about what constitutes good teaching. One prominent scholar and consultant suggests that definitions of good teaching are based on the proportional emphasis assigned to each of the following areas: content expertise, instructional delivery skills, and instructional design skills (Arreola, "Evaluating")[2]. Although data relating to each of these instructional roles may come from a variety of sources, no single source is appropriate for assessing a teacher's effectiveness in all three. For instance, students do not usually provide valid data regarding content expertise, while peers do not usually provide valid data regarding instructional delivery skills (Arreola, "Faculty" 67). Consequently, Arreola has devised a "Data-Gathering Specification Matrix," which appears, in simplified form, in the figure below. The following discussion assumes familiarity with this matrix.

Data-Gathering Specification Matrix

Role	Sources		
TEACHING	STUDENTS	PEERS	SELF
1) Instructional Delivery Skills	Questionnaire	-----	Self Report or Questionnaire
2) Instructional Design Skills	Questionnaire	Peer Review of Materials	Self Report
3) Content Expertise	------	Peer Analysis of Course Content	Self Report

Student Evaluation. Despite disagreements over their validity, student surveys have become a stable component of faculty evaluation in most colleges and universities. These surveys are used for assessing instructional design and delivery.

Hundreds of books, chapters, and articles have examined the design and validation of student questionnaires. Cashin (Student Ratings) provides a useful survey of the current professional consensus that arises from this array of research and scholarship. A particularly useful and compendious resource for departments wishing to introduce or reexamine a system of student evaluation is the "Student Rating Form Selection and Development Kit" developed by Aleamoni and Arreola. Rating forms are also indexed and reviewed in the annual volumes of Mental Measurement Yearbook and Tests in Print; as newer forms are developed and tested, announcements and reviews are published in three leading

professional journals: Instructional Evaluation, Journal of Educational Measurement, and Measurement News.

Although most departments use information gathered from student surveys to evaluate instructors, there are also ways of using it to improve teaching. Cohen and Herr report some success in this regard when surveys are taken at midterm and the results are made immediately available. Aleamoni ("Usefulness"), however, has found that student evaluation is more likely to lead to improved teaching when accompanied by personal consultation with a peer or other resource person. Some experts favor the "cafeteria-style" survey form, which allows instructors to target specific items from a long list of criteria, although Cashin ("Assessing" 98) argues that this is inappropriate for summative evaluation. Cooper has designed a nine-step process--involving class visitation, a midterm student survey, and videotaping--whereby this consultation can be regularized and made effective. Gil, arguing that student evaluation without professional consultation will not affect teaching, arrives at the intuitively evident conclusion that teachers, like students, benefit more from positive than from negative feedback. Finally, a department that simply cannot commit the necessary resources to professional consultation can at least try to identify the classroom behaviors privileged by the student questionnaire it uses. (Murray has found that, in a very general sense, student surveys tend to valorize leadership, extraversion, objectivity, and lack of anxiety.)

Two controversial methods of gathering student data involve surveys of former students (see Smith and Nason) and evaluation of learning. The latter method, which entails some type of testing, is, according to Centra, "practical only in multi-section courses to which students [have] been preferably randomly assigned, and which employ a common examination that was unknown to the instructors (to avoid teaching to the test)" ("Colleagues" 336). Freshman composition offers an obvious opportunity for this type of evaluation, although the dangers of a poorly designed or inadequately tested approach are considerable.

In short, most authorities agree that student evaluation is at least as valid as other measures of teaching effectiveness and probably is the single most effective measure of instructional delivery. Alone, however, it is not an adequate means of evaluating teachers, and there are ways to maximize its validity as a summative instrument as well as to enhance its usefulness as a formative one.

Peer Evaluation. Faculty peers are better qualified than students to assess content expertise and are also well suited to evaluate instructional design. More specifically, colleagues are best qualified to evaluate the following: mastery and selection of course content, course structure and objectives, appropriateness of assignments and other course materials, currency of instructional methodology, commitment to teaching, and support of the departmental mission (Cohen and McKeachie 148). Most of these criteria can be assessed by examining syllabi, printed assignments, grade reports, responses to student

work, and similar documents. Detailed questionnaires for recording such assessments have been developed by French-Lazovick (79-81) and Seldin (Changing Practices 162).

One area in which peer evaluation may be misused, however, is classroom observation. One researcher states unequivocally: "peer ratings based on visitation are so lacking in reliability that they are useless for summative purposes. This is true even when visitation is carried out in a very systematic way" (French-Lazovik 74). Proof can be found in a study by Ward, Clark, and Von Harrison, who used trained "covert" and "overt" evaluators to demonstrate that teaching effectiveness improved dramatically on those days when instructors knew they were being observed.

Classroom visitation is, however, an appropriate method of formative assessment, though again the choice of instruments is crucial. In general, a good observation instrument is one that targets the same criteria as a department's student questionnaire. A wealth of examples can be found in Boricn and Madden (150-76) and Simon and Boyer (107-682). More recently, observation instruments have been developed by Seldin (Changing Practices 163-65); Sorcinelli (13); and Helling (150-54), whose form elicits only favorable and supportive responses. Although instruments vary in length, structure, and content, most observation models feature a three-step process that includes a preliminary conference, class visitation, and a follow-up conference. Generally, observations are conducted by a three- or four-person committee, at least one member of which is nominated by the visited instructor.

Two sources that relate specifically to English study describe recommended techniques of peer evaluation. Garman's 1971 doctoral dissertation sets forth a method whereby English departments can use a clinical supervisor as a resource person. William Woods describes a system of classroom observation used at Wichita State University. Although Woods's article addresses an urgent need, its usefulness is limited since it does not describe the observation instrument used, and, like most items in CCC's "Staffroom Interchange" column, it lacks documentation.

Two other methods of peer evaluation are a seminar report delivered to an audience of colleagues and videotaping of classroom instruction (Lichty and Peterson). The former approach clearly provides an opportunity to demonstrate content expertise as well as skills involving instructional design. Videotaping, however, is more problematic: although it may eliminate some of the tension and artificiality inherent to the physical presence of three or four observers in the class, there is no reason to suppose that videotaped classes are any less subject to the distorting effects reported by Ward, Clark, and Von Harrison. Most experts treat videotaping as a method of self-evaluation, and it will therefore be discussed in in greater detail hereafter.

Self-Evaluation. It should come as no surprise that self-evaluation is considered the least valid measure of teaching effectiveness, although surprisingly little research has been undertaken to prove its invalidity (Carroll 181). Some experts even doubt that self-evaluation can improve instruction (see, for

example, Seldin, "Self-Assessment" 71), though others view self-evaluation as an appropriate means of gathering formative data relative to the objectives, content, and organization of courses and to the instructor's ability to sustain interest and promote learning (Aleamoni, "Developing"). Carroll lends support to the latter view by noting that although self-ratings do not correlate highly with the evaluations of students or peers, they "are particularly effective when they serve to identify for the instructor certain unexpected discrepancies with other ratings" (182). Centra adds that teachers are often able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, "though they use only the positive end of a scale in doing so" (Determining 49). In short, self-evaluation is best used in conjunction with other forms of assessment, and it can be a particularly effective means of getting teachers to confront discrepancies between self-perceptions and the perceptions of others, especially students.

One promising method of self-evaluation involves the videotaping of class sessions, although experts have been careful to specify the circumstances under which it is most likely to be effective. Rezler and Anderson have found that instructors do not benefit unless they view the videotape with a trained consultant who can stop the videotape from time to time in order to draw attention to specific teaching behaviors. Salomon and McDonald have shown, further, that change occurs only when instructors can compare their videotaped behaviors with some model of effective teaching. Finally, Fuller and Manning provide a detailed set of guidelines for the use of videotaping for

faculty self-evaluation. Briefly, those guidelines are as follows:

1. Videotaping should be done in a typical classroom.
2. Playback should be confidential.
3. Teacher and consultant should reach prior agreement regarding the behaviors that are to be observed.
4. Subjects must be enthusiastic, self-critical, and open to change.
5. Feedback should be authoritative, fair, and constructive.
6. Consultants must be empathetic and non-judgmental but also assertive in calling attention to remediable weaknesses. (509)

Regardless of the form it assumes in a particular department, self-evaluation should follow a standard structure. Seldin ("Self-Assessment" 72) suggests that instructors might simply be asked to respond to the same questionnaire as their students. Seldin also recommends several formats for self-reports ("Self-Assessment" 73-74, Changing Practices 167-73); others can be found in Carroll (185-90), Centra (Determining 53-54), and Larson (101-02). Kindsvatter and Wilen provide several observation instruments for videotaped classes. Seldin describes the organization of a "teaching portfolio" in which an instructors can document their strengths and accomplishments ("Academic" 14-16).

Conclusions. Concluding his 1970 survey of teacher evaluation in English, Richard Larson declared:

> [I]t remains clear that the art of evaluation, though it has been with us for many years, has by no means come to maturity. . . . No one yet knows how to establish a dependable connection between an act or acts performed by an agent whom we call a teacher, and important changes on the persons--we call them "students"--who interact in some mysterious way with the teacher. (63-64)

The preceding discussion provides a cursory view of some of the major developments in the field of instructional evaluation that have arisen since Larson delivered this sobering assessment. Although it is difficult to guess what a current survey of English departments might show, I do not sense that many have incorporated state-of-the-art techniques for developing and assessing effective teaching. Certainly there has not been any "paradigm shift" in this area comparable to the one chronicled by many observers of the English curriculum. Whereas the development and evaluation of student writing, for example, has been the subject of so much research that we now have an impressive "meta-analysis" to sort out this body of scholarship (Hillocks), only a handful of articles address the measurement of effective English teaching in higher education. Surely we owe our colleagues the same care, deliberation, and kindness that our students deserve whenever we examine and evaluate their work.

Furthermore, the current demand for accountability is spurred not only by the reports of foundations and government agencies but also by the more demagogic appeals of books like The

Closing of the American Mind and Profscam. These books, unlike their counterparts from the sixties and seventies, have targeted higher education. Especially worrisome is the possibility that, facing such pressure, colleges and universities could be called upon to document student learning through testing, just as primary and secondary schools in a number of states currently are expected to do. Since they do not define learning in terms of acquisition and retention, English departments are particularly vulnerable in this regard and have a clear stake in finding and defending more appropriate means of measuring good teaching.

More encouraging is the growing recognition that there is no entirely appropriate one-size-fits-all method of evaluating faculty. Researchers are finding that student ratings correlate with academic field (Cashin, "Assessing" 94). An increasing number of institutions encourage faculty members to draft professional-growth contracts, permitting some variance in the way effective teaching is defined and measured (Seldin, "Self-Assessment" 73). A few colleges and universities have even established separate career tracks for teaching and research (Mooney A18). Presumably professors choosing to emphasize the former can devote more time to instructional improvement and will enjoy greater access to appropriate resources. As English faculty begin to exploit this pluralism, they may find it necessary to assert vigorously their qualifications to define and measure good teaching in a manner they deem appropriate to the discipline.

I propose two strategies. First, English departments might benefit from a current anthology of evaluative instruments and procedures validated within specific settings. Particularly useful would be any materials generated by English faculty in consultation with specialists in the field of instructional development. Second, scholars in English study might profitably establish their own corpus of research in the area of teaching assessment. Are we comfortably convinced, for example, that classroom observation by peers will not provide valid summative data in an English department? Isn't it possible that humanistic paradigms (e.g., the thick description of ethnography) provide richer sources of data than the empirical, often behaviorist, models of educationist research? The rationale for generating our own procedures and our own methods for validating them has been provided, ironically, by Lawrence Aleamoni, one of the leading researchers in the educationist tradition:

> [I]f the department has not established clear criteria and guidelines, then [others] will begin imposing their own standards. It is imperative that departmental faculty be aware that, if they do not develop their own standards, someone else will impose his or her own. ("Some Practical Approaches" 76)

Notes

[1]Both reports call to mind the accountability movement and comparable trends from previous decades. Brought on by a complex array of socioeconomic causes, such trends have aroused brief periods of scrutiny without fundamentally altering a system of academic rewards thought to privilege research over teaching. There are, however, reasons to surmise that the current movement may lead to more lasting results. First, renewed emphasis of teaching comes at a time when faculty in liberal-arts colleges and comprehensive ("second-tier") universities are already under increasing pressure to publish. The result, in the words of one harried young professor, is that "You cut out all the contemplative stuff. You find yourself teaching hysterically and doing research hysterically" (qtd. in Heller A14). Also, demographic data suggest that colleges and universities will replace a disproportionate share of their faculties during the coming decade. Proponents of reform are therefore able to argue that the professional values of a generation of professors are at stake. Finally, economic hardships reinforce adisturbing appeal to consumers found in the Cheney Report: "When faculty members teach less, there is a financial consequence. Because more people must be hired to teach, the costs of education escalate--and so does tuition" (qtd. in "'Research'" A24).

[2]According to Arreola, emphasis of content expertise defines a good teacher as one who <u>provides the opportunity for</u> learning; emphasis of instructional delivery skills defines a good teacher as one who <u>encourages</u> learning; emphasis of instructional design

skills defines a good teacher as one who causes learning. Obviously, no workable definition of good teaching should ignore any of these three areas. However, it should be clear that the first definition minimizes accountability, while the third definition accentuates it, possibly to the point of ushering in student achievement tests as a valid measure of teaching effectiveness.

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